RELEASED IN FULL

PAGE 01 SEOUL 14082 020939Z
ACTION EAP-00

INFO	LOG-00	COPY-01	ADS-00	INR-10	SS-00	OIC-02	CIAE-00
	EB-00	H-01	MSC-01	IO-19	NEA-06	NSCE-00	NSAE-00
	SSO-00	HA-09	L-03	TRSE-00	PM-10	PA-01	FAAE-00
	DOTE-00	OMB-01	INRE-00	OCS-06	CA-02	USSS-00	USIE-00
	FBIE-00	SP-02	SNP-01	C-01	PRS-01	DS-01	DSE-00
	SCT-02	P-02	T-01	/083 W			

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O 020541Z DEC 87
FM AMEMBASSY SEOUL
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 5592
INFO AMEMBASSY BEIJING
AMEMBASSY TOKYO
AMEMBASSY MANAMA
CHJUSMAG SEOUL KS//
COMUSKOREA SEOUL KS//CJ-CC/BJ-CM-H/SJS/EJ-J//
SA CINCUNC KS
USCINCPAC HONOLULU HI
JCS WASHDC
SECDEF WASHDC

S E C R E T SEOUL 14082

USCINCPAC ALSO FOR POLAD

E.O. 12356: DECL: OADR
TAGS: PTER, PREL, KS, KN, JA
SUBJECT: SUSPECTED NORTH KOREAN COMPLICITY IN SABOTAGE OF KAL 858

1. (U) FURTHER TO SEPTELS, ROK NEWSPAPERS HEADLINED ON DECEMBER 2 POSSIBLE NORTH KOREAN COMPLICITY IN THE SUSPECTED SABOTAGE OF KAL 858 BY THE JAPANESE COUPLE DETAINED IN BAHRAIN. ALTHOUGH THERE WAS SOME SPECULATION THAT THE TWO MIGHT BE TIED TO THE JAPANESE RED ARMY, MOST PAPERS HERE STRESSED THEIR PURPORTED LINK TO NORTH KOREA

VIA "CHOSEN SOREN", THE PRO-PYONGYANG KOREAN RESIDENTS' ASSOCIATION IN JAPAN. ASSISTANT FOREIGN MINISTER PARK SOO GIL REPORTEDLY CITED JAPANESE AUTHORITIES TO THE EFFECT THAT THE WOMAN INVOLVED MIGHT BE A MEMBER OF THIS

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF STATE
REVIEW AUTHORITY: SAMUEL V SMITH
DATE/CASE ID: 05 AUG 2009 200807065

ORGANIZATION. PROMINENT PLAY WAS ALSO GIVEN TO JAPANESE REPORTS SUGGESTING THAT HER COMPANION WHO COMMITTED SUICIDE IN BAHRAIN UNDER THE NAME "HACHIYA" MAY BE AN ETHNIC KOREAN RESIDENT OF TOKYO NAMED MIYAMOTO.

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2. (U) THE AFTERNOON VERNACULAR PAPERS QUOTED FOREIGN MINISTER CHOI SAYING THAT ALTHOUGH THERE IS "CONSIDERABLE SUSPICION" THAT NORTH KOREA AND/OR CHOSEN SOREN MIGHT BE INVOLVED, THERE IS AS YET NO "CONCRETE EVIDENCE" OF THIS OR EVEN THAT THE TWO DETAINED IN BAHRAIN ARE IN FACT JAPANESE. OTHER MOFA OFFICIALS INDICATED THAT A JOINT INVESTIGATION BY BAHRAIN, JAPAN, AND THE ROK IS UNDERWAY. THEY REPORTEDLY SAID THAT THE ROKG IS WILLING TO LET BAHRAIN TAKE THE LEAD IN THIS INVESTIGATION BUT SEOUL MAY REQUEST EXTRADITION OF THE SURVIVING WOMAN SUSPECT IF AND WHEN EVIDENCE OF HER GUILT APPEARS TO JUSTIFY IT.

3. (C) FOREIGN MINISTER CHOI TOLD AMBASSADOR PRIVATELY THAT HE IS "FIRMLY CONVINCED" OF PYONGYANG'S COMPLICITY. A WORKING-LEVEL MOFA CONTACT ECHOED THIS VIEW, NOTING THAT NORTH KOREA MAY HAVE ORDERED THE DESTRUCTION OF KAL 858 TO DISCOURAGE ATTENDANCE AT NEXT YEAR'S SEOUL OLYMPICS. HE CONCEDED THAT THE PROXIMITY OF THE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION HERE, AND THE LIKELIHOOD THAT THIS INCIDENT WILL BENEFIT RULING PARTY CANDIDATE ROH TAE WOO, MIGHT BE "AWKWARD" FOR PYONGYANG. BUT HE SUGGESTED THAT, AS MAY HAVE BEEN IN THE CASE IN THE RANGOON BOMBING, THOSE IN FAVOR OF TERRORIST SOLUTIONS REGARDLESS OF BROADER POLITICAL COSTS COULD HAVE PREVAILED IN NORTH KOREAN COUNCILS. OPPOSITION LEADERS

HAVE PRIVATELY TOLD US THEY TOO ASSUME NORTH KOREAN RESPONSIBILITY.

4. (C) JAPANESE EMBASSY WAS ABLE TO SHED LITTLE LIGHT ON THE AFFAIR BUT DID EXPRESS CONCERN THAT IT COULD STIMULATE ROK ANTI-JAPANESE SENTIMENT, A CONCERN THAT STRIKES US AS LIKELY BUT OF WHICH THERE ARE NO SIGNS AS YET. ROK-JAPANESE COOPERATION ON THE CASE THUS FAR APPEARS EXCELLENT.

5. (S) COMMENT: PRELIMINARY INFORMATION AVAILABLE BOTH TO US AND THE ROKG INDICATES THAT HACHIYA/MIYAMOTO MAY BE ONE MIYAMOTO AKIRA AKA KO MYUNG YOON, WHO IS A KNOWN NORTH KOREAN INTELLIGENCE OPERATIVE RESIDENT IN JAPAN. WHATEVER THE ALLEGED ROLE OF THE JAPANESE RED ARMY OR CHOSEN SOREN,

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THERE THUS APPEARS TO BE GROUNDS AT THIS POINT FOR SUSPECTING PYONGYANG'S INVOLVEMENT. THE EVIDENCE WE HAVE SEEN DOES NOT YET PERMIT FIRM CONCLUSIONS ON THIS SCORE. HOWEVER, A GROWING NUMBER OF SOUTH KOREAN CLEARLY ARE CONVINCED OF ITS CULPABILITY AND WE EXPECT A DRAMATIC HARDENING OF ROK ATTITUDES TOWARD THE NORTH, WHICH WILL GREATLY REDUCE RECEPTIVITY HERE TO DIALOGUE ON THE OLYMPICS OR ANY OTHER SOUTH-NORTH ISSUE. LILLEY##

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